

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 160697

E.O. 11652:

TAGS: MARR, TD, US

SUBJECT: OMEGA NAVIGATION STATION SUMMARY RECORD OF
NEGOTIATIONS

1. THE OMEGA NAVIGATION STATION IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
IS ONE OF A NETWORK OF EIGHT STATIONS NOW OPERATING WORLD-
WIDE. OTHER STATIONS ARE LOCATED IN NORWAY, LIBERIA,
HAWAII, NORTH DAKOTA, LA REUNION, ARGENTINA, AND JAPAN.
A NINTH OMEGA STATION IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION IN AUSTRALIA.
THE OMEGA SYSTEM IS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE NAVIGATIONAL
ASSISTANCE TO PROPERLY EQUIPPED SHIPS AND AIRCRAFT OF
ALL NATIONS. THE STATIONS ARE ESTABLISHED UNDER BILATERAL
AGREEMENTS UNDER WHICH THE UNITED STATES PROVIDES
ESSENTIAL ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT AND THE HOST COUNTRY
SHARES THE-COST OF INSTALLATION, OPERATION, AND;
MAINTENANCE.

2. THE OMEGA STATION IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO ORIGINALLY
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WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1965 INSIDE THE FORMER CHAGUARAMUS
NAVAL BASE, USE OF WHICH WAS GRANTED TO THE UNITED
STATES BY GREAT BRITAIN IN A 1941 AGREEMENT
(THE LEASED NAVAL AND AIR BASES AGREEMENT). THE LEGAL

BASIS FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF THE STATION ON THE CHAGUARAMUS
NAVAL BASE WAS THE WEST INDIES DEFENSE AREAS AGREEMENT

SIGNED IN PORT OF SPAIN ON FEBRUARY 10, 1961. THIS AGREEMENT SUCCEEDED THE LEASED BASES AGREEMENT. THE STATION AT CHAGUARAMUS WAS TO BE AN EXPERIMENTAL STATION, ONE OF ONLY FOUR THEN ESTABLISHED TO TEST THE FEASIBILITY OF THE OMEGA SYSTEM. CHAGUARAMUS WAS USED BECAUSE AN EXISTING COMMUNICATION FACILITY THERE COULD BE CONVERTED TO OMEGA USE, PROVIDING ONE OF THE FOUR EXPERIMENTAL STATIONS AT MINIMUM COST.

3. IN MID-1965, THE GOVERNMENT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (GOTT) ADVISED THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT (USG) THAT THE UNILATERAL ACTION BY THE USG IN ESTABLISHING THE OMEGA STATION DID NOT COMPLY WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE 1961 DEFENSE AREAS AGREEMENT AND THAT THE GOTT SHOULD HAVE BEEN INFORMED AND ITS APPROVAL OBTAINED BEFORE THE OMEGA FACILITY WAS ESTABLISHED. THE USG POSITION WAS THAT THE OMEGA FACILITY WAS NOT A NEW FACILITY BUT MERELY THE UPGRADING OF AN EXISTING FACILITY AND THUS NO NEW AGREEMENT WAS REQUIRED. AFTER DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR TO TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO AND PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, THE USG WAS ABLE TO SATISFY THE GOTT THAT THE OMEGA MODIFICATIONS WERE IN ACCORD WITH THE 1961 DEFENSE AREAS AGREEMENT.

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UNDERSTANDING AND IN RESPONSE TO A REPEATED REQUEST OF THE GOTT, THE UNITED STATES INFORMED THE GOTT ON NOVEMBER 25, 1965 THAT IT WAS PREPARED TO RETURN THE MAJOR PART OF CHAGUARAMUS NAVAL BASE TO THE GOTT. AFTER PROTRACTED NEGOTIATIONS, AGREEMENT WAS REACHED; ALL LANDS AT THE BASE, EXCEPT FOR THAT OCCUPIED BY THE OMEGA STATION, A U.S. AIR FORCE TRACKING STATION, AND CERTAIN COMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES, WERE RETURNED IN JUNE 1967. BETWEEN JULY 1967 AND EARLY 1970, NO CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES WERE RAISED BY EITHER SIDE WITH REGARD TO THE OMEGA STATION.

5. IN APRIL 1970, THE UNITED STATES EMBASSY, ON BEHALF OF THE U.S. AIRFORCE, OFFERED TO RELEASE TO THE GOT. - ADDITIONAL SECTIONS OF LAND FROM THE BASE ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE GOTT WOULD PROVIDE UTILITIES TO THE AREA RETAINED. THIS OFFER WAS COUNTERED BY

THE GOTT WITH A REQUEST THAT ALL USG HELD LAND IN CHAGUARAMAS, INCLUDING THAT ON WHICH THE OMEGA STATION WAS LOCATED, BE RETURNED.

6. IN RESPONSE TO THIS GOTT REQUEST, THE U.S. AIR FORCE IN JULY 1970 INITIATED A REEVALUATION OF ITS REQUIREMENT FOR THE TRACKING STATION, AND THE USG COMMENCED A SEARCH FOR A SUITABLE RELOCATION SITE FOR THE OMEGA STATION.

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7. AT THIS TIME, SERIOUS CONSIDERATION WAS GIVEN TO PROPOSING TO THE GOTT THAT THE TRINIDAD OMEGA STATION BE CONVERTED TO PERMANENT STATION STATUS AND OPERATED JOINTLY UNDER A GOTT-US BILATERAL AGREEMENT SIMILAR TO THOSE WITH OTHER OMEGA HOST COUNTRIES. HOWEVER, AS THE LOCATION ON AN ATLANTIC EQUATORIAL STATION DEPENDS UPON THE GEOGRAPHIC SPACING ON THE WORLD-WIDE SYSTEM AND AS TECHNICAL PROPAGATION CHARACTERISTICS

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APPEARED TO FAVOR A STATION IN WESTERN AFRICA, THE USG IN OCTOBER PROPOSED INSTEAD THE NEGOTIATION OF NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE CONTINUED OPERATION FOR FIVE YEARS OF THE TRINIDAD OMEGA STATION AS AN EXPERIMENTAL STATION. THE USG STATED THAT UNDER SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT IT WOULD CONTINUE TO OPERATE AND FUND THE STATION. IN THE SAME LETTER, THE USG INFORMED THE GOTT THAT IT INTENDED TO PHASE OUT THE AIR FORCE TRACKING STATION AND TO RETURN BY OCTOBER 1, 1971 THE LAND ON WHICH IT WAS LOCATED.

8. THESE PROPOSALS WERE ACCEPTED BY PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS ON NOVEMBER 27 WITH THE MODIFICATION THAT ARRANGEMENTS BE MADE FOR THE ASSOCIATION FOR TRAINING PURPOSES OF TRINIDADIAN WITH THE OMEGA PROJECT. IN SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSIONS IN APRIL, 1971, THE GOTT PROPOSED, AND THE USG AGREED, THAT THE OMEGA STATION WOULD CONTINUE TO OPERATE UNDER THE TERMS OF THE DEFENSE AREAS AGREEMENT. IN REGARD TO THE GOTT REQUEST FOR TRAINING TRINIDIANS, THE US AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT THE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH TRAINING TRINIDIANS PRIOR TO A FINAL DECISION ON PERMANENT STATUS FOR THE STATION. HE STATED THAT ONCE TRINIDAD WAS FOUND TO BE THE BEST SITE FOR AN ATLANTIC EQUATORIAL STATION AND THE GOTT AGREED TO ITS JOINT OPERATION, THE USG WOULD COMMENCE TRAINING TRINIDIANS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE OPERATION OF THE STATION.

9. IN JULY 1972, THE GOTT AGAIN REQUESTED THE RETURN OF ALL DEFENSE AREA LAND STILL UNDER USG CONTROL. THIS REQUEST WAS TRANSMITTED AT THE SAME TIME THE GOTT INTRODUCED LEGISLATION INTO PARLIAMENT FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHAGUARAMUS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY. WHILE DISCUSSING

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SIONS REGARDING THIS REQUEST WERE BEING CONDUCTED, THE USG DECIDED IN MAY 1973 TO CHOOSE LIBERIA AS THE SITE FOR THE PERMANENT ATLANTIC EQUATORIAL OMEGA STATION. AT THE SAME TIME, NEGOTIATIONS WERE INITIATED WITH AUSTRALIA FOR BUILDING AN OMEGA STATION THERE.

10. IN VIEW OF THESE ACTIONS, DISCUSSIONS WITH THE GOTT REGARDING THE OMEGA STATION WERE SUSPENDED. THE STATION CONTINUED TO BE EXPERIMENTAL. IT WAS EXPECTED IT WOULD BE CLOSED AS SOON AS THE OTHER STATIONS WERE COMPLETED AND, CERTAINLY, PRIOR TO TERMINATION OF THE DEFENSE AREAS AGREEMENT IN DECEMBER 1977.

11. IT IS APPARENT FROM THE RECORD THAT FOR TECHNICAL AND BUDGETARY REASONS OWING TO UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE LENGTH OF TIME THE TRINIDAD OMEGA STATION WOULD CONTINUE TO OPERATE NO FURTHER ACTION WAS TAKEN ON TRAINING OF TRINIDADIANS, AS SUGGESTED BY PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS.

12. FROM MAY 1973 UNTIL EARLY 1977, THERE WERE NO SIGNIFICANT DISCUSSIONS ON THE OMEGA STATION WITH THE GOTT. HOWEVER, IN MID-1977, AS IT BECAME APPARENT THAT THE LIBERIAN STATION WAS NOT FULLY MEETING THE REQUIREMENTS ON THE OVERALL OMEGA NETWORK AND THAT THE AUSTRALIAN STATION WOULD NOT BECOME OPERATIONAL PRIOR TO 1981, THE USG REQUESTED THE GOTT TO PERMIT THE OMEGA STATION IN TRINIDAD TO CONTINUE TO OPERATE UNTIL THE END OF 19

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